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ABSTRACT

A study was undertaken to examine the attitudes of parents and teachers toward the integration of young children with special needs and typically developing children into the same early childhood settings, and to determine any significant differences between the teachers' and parents' attitudes. An integration questionnaire was administered to 30 teachers and 30 parents of 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children in Hardin County, Ohio. Respondents were asked to rate 10 statements on integration of students with special needs, using a 4-point scale to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement, with total scores ranging from 40 (indicating strong agreement with integration) to 10 (indicating strong disagreement). Completed questionnaires were received from all 60 participants. Analysis of the responses indicated that both parents and teachers were more favorable than unfavorable toward integration, with scores ranging from 20 to 40 points. Specifically, both parents and teachers indicated that if they had a child, they would prefer that he or she be in an integrated program, and that they agreed with the statement that special needs children were more alike than different from typically developing children. Finally, no significant differences in attitudes were found between teachers and parents. (BCY)

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Preschool Integration from Teacher and Parent Perspective

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Running head: TEACHER/PARENT VIEWS OF INTEGRATION

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Abstract

This pilot study examines the attitudes of early childhood teachers and parents toward integration of typically developing and handicapped three, four, and five year old children in preschool and kindergarten settings. Attitudes of thirty teachers and thirty parents were obtained with a ten-item Integration Questionnaire which used a Likert-type scoring scale. The data obtained suggests that both teachers and parents have favorable attitudes toward integration in early childhhood settings and there was no signifigant difierence noted between teacher and parent attitudes.

Preschool Integration from Teacher and Parent Perspective

Integrated early childhood programs in which typically developing and handicapped children are together in the same setting have had a great impact on the movement toward educating all young children in the least restrictive environment.

There has been much research related to the impact of integration on the academic, social, and emotional development of young handicapped children. Jenkins, Odom, and Speltz (1989) found that handicapped children placed in integrated preschool settings showed a higher proportion of interactive play, higher language development, and higher ratings of social competence than their handicapped peers placed in segregated preschool settings. Guralnick and Groom (1988) found that in an integrated preschool setting, delayed children played more constructively and engaged in a substantially higher rate of peer-related social behaviors.

The developmental impact of integrated

preschools on typical children has been studied. Parents of typical children have expressed concern about whether their children could receive quality educational time in an integrated setting because they feared the teacher would have to spend a greater amount of time meeting the needs of the handicapped children. However with their children's participation in successful integrated programs, the parents of children without handicaps became more supportive of integration (Quintero, Striefel, Killoran, and Ahooraiyan, 1987). Odom, Deklyen, and Jenkins (1984) found that placement of typical children into integrated special education classes, where the majority of the other children were handicapped, did not appear to interfere with normal development of the typical children.

Attitudes toward integration are also an important factor in this movement toward least restrictive environment. Schmelkin (1981) found that special education teachers, regular teachers, and nonteachers all had relatively positive attitudes toward integration.

In a New Zealand study conducted by McDonald

(1987), parents and teachers were asked to give their views of handicapped children's developmental gains after attending integrated kindergartens and playcentres. There was an overall resemblance between the responses of the teachers and the parents. Teachers rated the area of language development first, social development second, and emotional development third. Parents rated social development first, followed by language development and then emotional development.

The major purposes of this study were (a) to examine the attitudes of parents and teachers toward the movement to integrate young children with handicaps and young typically developing children into the same early childhood settings and (b) to determine if there was a significant difference in the attitudes of the teachers and the parents toward integration.

Method

Subjects

Thirty teachers and thirty parents of three, four, and five year olds answered the Integration Questionnaire. The teachers and parents were from

several different communities in Hardin County located in west central Ohio.

The teachers were all female subjects and included six preschool special education teachers, six regular preschool teachers, five teaching assistants, two early intervention teachers, seven kindergarten teachers, two speech therapists, and two physical education teachers.

Twelve of the parents were male and eighteen of the parents were female. Some of the parents had children enrolled in kindergarten, some in integrated public preschools, some in church preschools, and some did not have their children enrolled in any type of early childhood program.

Measure

The Integration Questionnaire was constructed to measure attitudes toward integration in early childhood programs. Ten items were placed on the questionnaire. Each of the items was responded to on a four point Likert-type scale with 4 indicating strong agreement, 3 indicating agreement, 2 indicating disagreement, and 1 indicating strong disagreement. Both negatively and positively

phrased items were written. This factor was accounted for in the scoring scale. The possible range of scores for the entire questionnaire was from a 10 (indicating strong disagreement with integration) to a 40 (indicating a strong agreement with integration). The Cronbach Alpha Reliability of the ten question scale was .94.

Procedure

Thirty teachers and thirty parents of three, four, and five year olds served as voluntary participants. They were given the Integration Questionnaire and asked to complete and return it within one week. All sixty participants responded. Before computing the results, the data for questions #3,#4,#6,#7,#8,and #10 was recoded to account for the mixture of both positively and negatively phrased items on the questionnaire.

Results

The major purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes of teachers and parents toward integration in early childhood settings and to determine if there was a significant difference in the attitudes of the teachers and the parents.

The range of scores on the 40 point scale for all participants was from 20 to 40 indicating that teachers and parents were more favorable than unfavorable toward integration. The mean score of teachers and parents combined was 3.2. The data in Table 1 shows the frequency and percent for the range of scores.

Insert Table 1 about here

There was no significant difference reported between attitudes of the male parents and the female parents.

The mean score for the teachers on the 40 point scale was 32.5 and the mean score for the parents was 31.7 reflecting no significant difference at the .05 level. However the scores of the parents were more similiar than the scores of the teachers on each of the ten items as reflected by the smaller standard deviation values.

Insert Table 2 about here

Discussion

The favorable attitudes toward integration in early childhood programs by both teachers and parents in this pilot study tend to support the research in the area of preschool integration (McDonald, 1987; Schmelkin, 1981).

There was no significant difference found between the attitudes of the teachers and the attitudes of the parents. Questions #4, #5, #6, and #10 on the Integration Questionnaire received responses that were the most similiar. Both parents and teachers indicated that if they were a parent of a special needs child they would prefer their child be in an integraqted rather than a segregated early childhood program, that they felt young children with special needs were more alike than different than their typically developing peers, and that they hoped to see public schools have more integrated early childhood programs in the future. These responses indicate that the subjects in this study are accepting of and in agreement with the current educational movement to educate all young children in the least restrictive

environment.

The Cronbach Alpha Reliability was .94 on the Integration Questionnaire. However attitude is a multidimensional response and there are many factors such as age, prior experience with integration, type of handicapping condition, and many other social and personal variables that were all potential parts of the responses given in this study. More studies are needed that are controlled across such variables as these.

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Table 1

Frequency and Percent for the Range of Teacher and Parent Scores Combined

Score	Frequency	Percent
20	1	1.7
21	1	1.7
22	1	1.7
23	3	5.0
24	2	3.3
25	2	3.3
26	1	1.7
28	2	3.3
29	6	10.0
30	2	3.3
31	8	13.3
32	1	1.7
33	4	6.7
34	1	1.7
35	2	3.3
36	8	13.3
37	4	6.7
38	2	3.3
39	6	10.0
40	3	5.0
Total	60	100.0

Note: 20 = Disagree with integration
30 = Agree with integration
40 = Strongly Agree with Integration

Table 2

Responses of Teachers(T) and Parents(P) to each Item as Written on the Integration Quettionnaire

Question	Group	Mean	Standard Deviation
#1	T	3.3	.84
	P	2.9	.64
#2	T	2.9	.94
	P	2.6	.49
3#	T	1.7	.60
	P	1.6	.57
#4	T	1.8	.71
	P	1.8	.65
#5	T	3.1	.83
	P	3.1	.68
#6	T	1.8	.73
	P	1.8	.46
#7	T	1.3	.55
	P	1.2	.43
#8	T	1.6	.62
	P	1.7	.64
#9	T	3.3	.78
	P	3.1	.73
#10	T	1.8	.83
	P	1.8	.73

INTEGRATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Please check the appropriate lines.

_____ Parent of a 3, 4, or 5 year old
_____ Teacher of 3, 4, or 5 year olds

_____ Male
_____ Female

Please give your opinion of the following statements using the following rating scale.

1 - Strongly Agree
2 - Agree
3 - Disagree
4 - Strongly Disagree

_____ 1. Young handicapped children with special needs should be kept in separate classrooms away from their typically developing peers.

_____ 2. In an integrated classroom (typical and handicapped children together) the teacher spends too much time and attention with the special needs children causing the typical children to suffer.

_____ 3. Typically developing children who have been in an integrated early childhood program will be more accepting of the handicapped population as they grow up.

_____ 4. If I were a parent of a special needs child, I would want my child to be in an integrated early childhood program with typically developing peers.

_____ 5. If I were a parent of a special needs child, I would want my child in a separate classroom away from his typically developing peers.

_____ 6. Young children with special needs and typically developing children are more alike than they are different.

_____ 7. Special needs children and typically developing children can be friends.

_____ 8. Special needs children learn appropriate language and social skills more quickly if placed in an integrated classroom where they have their typical peers to interact with.

_____ 9. I do not feel that special needs children belong in regular classrooms.

_____ 10. In the future I hope to see public schools have more integrated early childhood programs.